

February 7, 2019

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
The Florida Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we appreciate the strong commitments made within your first month as Governor on the importance of advancing Everglades restoration and solving Florida's ongoing water crisis. We stand ready to work with your Administration to achieve our shared goals for restoring the Everglades and improving water quality across the state.

In keeping with these strong commitments, we urge you to direct the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to withdraw its motion to vacate the consent decree that has been the engine driving water protections for Everglades National Park for three decades.

Originally filed in 1988 by the United States and immediately joined by several major environmental organizations, the case sought to stop pollution of the Everglades, including the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and Everglades National Park. Drainage pumps operated by SFWMD were pumping massive quantities of fertilizer-laden runoff from agricultural fields into the Everglades. After extensive settlement negotiations, a settlement agreement was reached by the parties in 1991 and then amended in 1995. Under the Amended consent decree, regulatory measures to reduce fertilizer runoff and the construction of artificial marshes – "Stormwater Treatment Areas" – were supposed to bring a halt to fertilizer pollution of the Everglades by the end of 2006. That deadline was not met and over the past dozen years, the sugar industry has made repeated efforts in the Legislature, in court, and in lobbying the District and the Governor's Office to lift the requirements of the consent decree. To date, those efforts have been turned back by the federal court because of opposition from the Justice Department under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, and opposition from the Miccosukee Tribe, the environmental organizations that are parties to the case, and the wider Everglades restoration advocacy community.

On Thursday, November 8, 2018 – two days after you were elected to office – the SFWMD Governing Board appointed by Governor Rick Scott, which you have recently asked to resign, voted to petition Judge Moreno to vacate the consent decree. They did so with a clear understanding of the significant public opposition such an action would bring and without offering you the time to be briefed on the issue.

Vacating the consent decree represents a tremendous threat to Everglades National Park, the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, and Florida Bay.

Since taking office, you have been decisive in your commitment to bringing a "fresh start" to the SFWMD. We believe that a Governing Board with different leadership and priorities would

agree that vacating the consent decree is a disservice to Florida's public. As such, we urge you to work with your new appointees to withdraw the motion to vacate the consent decree.

Sincerely,

Alex Gillen  
Policy Director  
**Bullsugar Alliance**

John Cassani  
**Calusa Waterkeeper**

Jaclyn Lopez  
Florida Director  
**Center for Biological Diversity**

Margaret R. Stewart  
Director  
**Center for Earth Jurisprudence**

Michael Baldwin  
President  
**"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society**

Aliki Moncrief  
Executive Director  
**Florida Conservation Voters**

Jim Gross  
Executive Director  
**Florida Defenders of the Environment**

Michael Chenoweth  
President  
**Florida Division of the Izaak Walton  
League of America**

Preston T. Robertson  
President & CEO  
**Florida Wildlife Federation**

Elinor Williams  
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**Friends of Arthur R. Marshall  
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Alan Farago  
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**Friends of the Everglades**

Robert Knight  
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**Howard T. Odum Florida Springs  
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Reinaldo Diaz J.D.  
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Tom Bausch  
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Executive Director  
**Progress Florida**

Diana Umpierre  
Organizing Representative  
**Sierra Club**